

VANITY FAIR AS ALLEGORY

By

DONALD EDWARD EDWARDS

Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma State University

Stillwater, Oklahoma

1972

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College
of the Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
July, 1979

Jhesus

1979

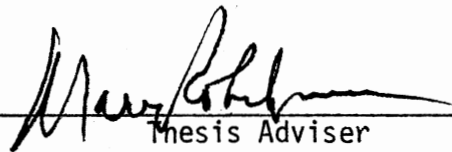
E265v

cop. 2

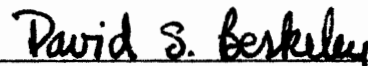


VANITY FAIR AS ALLEGORY

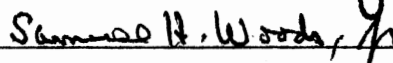
Thesis Approved:



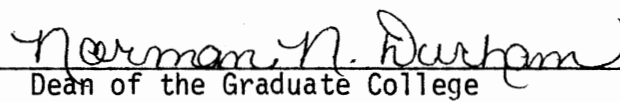
Thesis Adviser



David S. Berkeley



Samuel H. Woods, Jr.



Dean of the Graduate College

1031827

PREFACE

William Makepeace Thackeray's novel Vanity Fair has been called many things: a social satire, a "realistic" novel whose realism is flawed by the author's "intrusions," and much else. It has not, however, been seen as an allegory. This study attempts to show how Vanity Fair can be seen as an allegory and how Thackeray's illustrations in the novel support an allegorical reading of Vanity Fair.

I wish to express my appreciation to my major adviser, Dr. Mary Rohrberger, who contributed greatly to my abilities as a teacher and scholar and introduced me to Vanity Fair. I also wish to thank Dr. Samuel H. Woods, Jr., who encouraged me throughout my graduate course of study, and Dr. David Shelley Berkeley, who provided countless helpful comments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE TITLE <u>VANITY FAIR</u>	10
III. THE EARLY CHAPTERS	15
IV. THACKERAY'S ILLUSTRATIONS	27
V. CONCLUSION	63
A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Chapter I Pictorial Capital	30
2. Chapter I Tailpiece	30
3. "Rebecca's Farewell"	31
4. Chapter II Pictorial Capital	31
5. Sir Pitt on His Knees	33
6. Chapter XV Pictorial Capital	33
7. Young Dobbin Reading	38
8. Chapter V Pictorial Capital	38
9. Dobbin Meets Amelia	38
10. "Major Sugarplums"	39
11. "Becky's Second Appearance in the Character of Clytemnestra" .	41
12. "Virtue Rewarded, A Booth in Vanity Fair"	42
13. Final Tailpiece	48
14. Early Cover Illustration	53
15. Cruikshank's "The Folly of Crime"	55
16. Chapter 8 Tailpiece	57
17. Final Title Page	58

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although it may seem odd to readers who have always assumed or been taught that Vanity Fair is a novel of manners, or a social satire, or a realistic novel--and it has been called that and much else--there is some evidence that it may be yet something else which the novel as a whole has never been called: an allegory. In fact, several elements in Vanity Fair might lead the careful reader to rightly regard it as an allegory--not, of course, an allegory in the narrowest sense of the term, but rather one according to the prevailing current interpretation of the term, in which allegory is regarded as a mode.¹

What is meant by allegory presents some particular difficulties, as recent studies point out.² From the two Greek words agoreuo (a speech made in the agora) and allos (the adjective other), allegory originally referred to "deliberate dissimulation in a public speech."³ Wimsatt points out that, "as used by Greek writers (including St. Paul) and by medieval commentators, the word has a broad application, signifying any statement in which one thing is said and another understood."⁴ Leyburn agrees that "this meaning of doubleness is all that is conveyed by Quintillian, Cicero, or Plutarch, or by the medieval grammarians and Renaissance writers of dictionaries and rhetorics who derive from them."⁵ However, the term has been distorted since then, beginning late in the Middle Ages when allegory "came to be considered morally useful, its

function being purely didactic."⁶ As time went on, allegory came more and more to be identified also with personification, and it is this "usurpation of the word allegory by personification" which is largely responsible for "the disrepute into which the term began to fall in the late eighteenth century and from which it is only beginning to emerge," and this misuse of the word continues in "the disparagement of allegory among the new [formalist] critics."⁷ Thus allegory has been incorrectly defined as something mechanical, and "critics scorn it as a pedestrian notion somehow attached to a few masterworks by which it got in through the back door of literature."⁸ Or, as Wimsatt says, "modern critical theory often restricts allegory to developed and continued metaphors, that is, to complex systematic arrangements of events, objects, and characters to convey a double (or multiple) meaning."⁹ However, allegory should not be viewed in this sense. In Honig's words, "In so complex a matter a definition or a series of definitions will not even hint at its manifold uses and adaptations. One must take a broader view of the subject."¹⁰ As Fletcher maintains, "Allegory is a protean device, omnipresent in Western literature from the earliest times to the modern era," and it accounts for "an even wider variety of materials than with categories like 'satire,' 'tragedy,' or 'comedy.' Only the broadest notions, for example the modal concepts of 'irony' or 'mimesis,' embrace so many different kinds of literature."¹¹ Clifford concurs that "essentially allegory is, like irony, a mode, and capable of subsuming many different genres and forms."¹² The thesis of this study is that Vanity Fair can be so subsumed: an allegorical reading of Vanity Fair is not only reasonable but enriching.

There has always been a great diversity of opinion about Vanity Fair, a situation which in itself is not unique. What is startling, however, is that the very basis of criticism of it has shifted over the years. Perhaps this shift has been the result of changing mores; in any event, as G. Armour Craig puts it, "the responses of many thousands of readers for a hundred years to this much-read book must constitute one of the most erratic subterranean currents of our moral history."¹³

Dudley Flamm divides the earlier critics of Thackeray into three groups: those who saw Thackeray as a "realist whose satire was aimed at moral correction"; others who "objected to the cynicism" in his work; and those who "denied the truth of his depiction on the grounds that his world was too evil to be representative of the real world."¹⁴ Adverse criticism to Vanity Fair during Thackeray's lifetime is typified by that of Harriet Martineau, who could not finish the novel because of "the moral disgust it occasions";¹⁵ it was "revolting" to Robert Bell, for it forced one "to look into the depths of a loathsome truth";¹⁶ and an anonymous reviewer on the continent objected that it depicted "naked and prosaic actuality which is often hideous of aspect but always true to life," and he wondered, "Is it advisable to raise so ruthlessly the veil which hides the rottenness pervading modern society?"¹⁷

The opposite extreme is represented by the view of Charlotte Bronte, who, also of the opinion that Vanity Fair expressed the truth, did not object to that fact:

There is a man in our own days whose words are not framed for delicate ears; who, to my thinking, comes before the great ones of society, much as the son of Imlah came before the throned Kings of Judah and Israel; and who speaks truth as deep, with a power as prophet-like and vital. . . . I see in him an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognized; because I regard him as the

first social regenerator of the day--as the very master of that working corps who would restore to rectitude the warped system of things.¹⁸

Of course the public of Thackeray's day was much more familiar with the body of his work than we are today, and was generally aware that he had spent many years before the success of Vanity Fair, when he was in his mid-thirties, writing satires and parodies and drawing cartoons and caricatures that appeared in Fraser's Magazine and Punch, among others.¹⁹ As Trollope, writing in 1879, sixteen years after Thackeray's death, explains, when the first critics "began to discuss Vanity Fair, there had already grown up a feeling as to Thackeray as an author--that he was one who had taken up the business of castigating the vices of the world"; in addition, many readers as well as critics "began to declare that this writer was no novelist, but only a cynic," and, furthermore, "this special fault [cynicism] was certainly found with Vanity Fair at the time."²⁰

Among both the adverse and complimentary opinions, however, the word allegory rarely if ever even appears, except perhaps in passing reference, such as that by G. K. Chesterton, who said of Thackeray that "his way was to wander off into similes and allegories which repeated and yet mocked the main story like derisive and dying echoes."²¹ It is as if critics on either extreme believed that satire excludes allegory.

But satire and allegory are not incompatible. Leyburn's interesting study is quite helpful in showing that "the affinity between allegory and satire is so strong that their occasional union in satiric allegory would seem inevitable." Indeed, she continues, "satire seems always to have had a propensity toward allegorical form," even though, "curiously enough . . . critics write as if there were something incongruous in the two." Quite often "satire is thought of as preoccupied with the ugly

and degraded aspects of human nature; allegory, with the beautiful and exalted. Satire looks down; allegory looks up." However, this conception is wrong, for "the allegory may be exactly the satirist's way of making his satire real, if not realistic."²²

Aside from the belief that satire prohibits allegory, perhaps another reason for the disregard of the allegorical elements in Vanity Fair as time went on was the hegemony of realism-naturalism and so-called "objective" narration around the turn of the century. Although Henry James was referring to *Pendennis*, soon Vanity Fair also came to be seen as one of those "large loose baggy monsters."²³ Percy Lubbock was perhaps the most virulent of those who took up the cry,²⁴ but he was not alone; Ford Madox Ford pronounced that Thackeray intruded "his broken nose and myopic spectacles into the middle of the most thrilling scene";²⁵ and Carl Grabo complained that Thackeray "knows perfectly how the thing should be done and is usually content not to do it."²⁶ In any event, soon after the turn of the century and beyond the first third of the twentieth century, at least, Thackeray began to fall into the obscurity and disrepute which had long been the fate of allegory.²⁷

After World War II, however, Gordon N. Ray, who soon became the foremost Thackeray scholar, presented a collection of Thackeray's letters,²⁸ and a reexamination of the "cynic" began. By 1960, Ray's thorough two-volume biography had appeared to stimulate even further research.²⁹ One must also mention that in 1961, Wayne C. Booth's extremely influential The Rhetoric of Fiction appeared, paving the way for a fairer judgment and a reconsideration of Thackeray as well as others who did not conform to the canons of artistic "purity"--"realism," "objectivity," "detachment," etc.³⁰ Since then, several book-length studies

of Thackeray's major novels have appeared, including those by Loofbourow, Wheatley, McMaster, Hardy, and Rawlins.³¹ Both Flamm and Olmsted have compiled extensive bibliographies of Thackeray criticism.³² Sutherland's close and careful textual work, as one reviewer put it, "is going to be essential to future criticism."³³ Since 1965, tremendous strides have been made in understanding the function of Thackeray's illustrations, by Harvey, Hannah, Gneiting, and especially Stevens.³⁴ One final indication of the "Thackeray boom" is the increase in the number of American dissertations about him: ten between 1924 and 1950; twenty-three from 1960 to 1965; and fifty-nine from 1965 to 1975.³⁵

Several references are made in recent Thackeray scholarship to "allegory" in Vanity Fair, and I will note these when appropriate. Yet that is all they are, passing references, since the term "allegory" itself is neither discussed nor defined. Thus, even with all the new work on Vanity Fair as well as the several recent studies on allegory, there has been no coherent attempt that I am aware of to interpret and explain Vanity Fair as an allegory; I hope that this will be a step toward that interpretation. We will look at the allegorical implications in the title, in the early chapter, and in the illustrations, and at the affinities which these elements, and Thackeray's professed intentions, have with other allegorical literature.

NOTES

¹For a brief survey and analysis of relevant research, see "Down the Mode Mine," Times Literary Supplement (London), June 10, 1965, pp. 465-68.

²The works I have found most useful include Gay Clifford, The Transformations of Allegory (London: Routledge & Paul, 1975); Angus Fletcher, Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1964); Edwin Honig, Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1959); Ellen Douglas Leyburn, Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956); and James I. Wimsatt, Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1970).

³Leyburn, p. ciiii.

⁴Wimsatt, p. 22.

⁵Leyburn, p. 2.

⁶Leyburn, p. 3.

⁷Leyburn, p. 4.

⁸Honig, p. 3.

⁹Wimsatt, p. 22.

¹⁰Honig, p. 8.

¹¹Fletcher, p. 1.

¹²Clifford, p. 5.

¹³"On the Style of Vanity Fair," in The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Ian Watt (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 246, originally published in Style in Prose Fiction: English Institute Essays, ed. Harold C. Martin (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959), pp. 87-113.

¹⁴Thackeray's Critics: An Annotated Bibliography of British and American Criticism, 1836-1901 (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 33.

¹⁵Autobiography, ed. Maria Webster, two volumes (Boston, 1877), II, 60, as quoted in Gordon N. Ray, "Vanity Fair: One Version of the Novelist's Responsibility," in Watt, p. 257.

¹⁶"Vanity Fair," Fraser's Magazine, 38 (September, 1848), 321, as quoted in Ray, p. 257.

¹⁷Quoted from the Magazin fur die Litteratur des Auslandes in the Readers' Classics edition of Vanity Fair (Bath, 1919), p. 61, as quoted in Ray, p. 257.

¹⁸Jane Eyre, two volumes (Oxford, 1931), I, ix-x, as quoted in Ray, pp. 256-57.

¹⁹For a thorough recounting of this period of Thackeray's life as well as other biographical information about Thackeray, see Gordon N. Ray's two-volume biography, Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846 and Thackeray: The Age of Wisdom, 1847-1863 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955; 1960).

²⁰Thackeray (London, 1879; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research, 1968), pp. 90, 92.

²¹Thackeray (London: George Bell and Sons, 1909), p. xxiii.

²²Leyburn, p. 8.

²³"Preface," The Tragic Muse (New York: Scribner's, 1908), p. 22.

²⁴The Craft of Fiction (London: 1921; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1955), see especially pp. 87-88, 94-95.

²⁵The English Novel, From the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad (London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1929), p. 46.

²⁶The Technique of the Novel (New York: Scribner's, 1928), p. 59.

²⁷For a fuller discussion of the critical opinion toward Thackeray and Vanity Fair during these years, see John Charles Olmsted, Thackeray and His Twentieth-Century Critics: An Annotated Bibliography (New York: New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1977), pp. xiii-xix.

²⁸The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray, four volumes (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1945-46).

²⁹Uses of Adversity and Age of Wisdom.

³⁰The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961).

³¹John Loofbourow, Thackeray and the Form of Fiction (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964); James H. Wheatley, Patterns in Thackeray's Fiction (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969); Juliet McMaster, Thackeray: The Major Novels (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971); Barbara Hardy, The Exposure of Luxury: Radical Themes in Thackeray (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1972); and Jack P. Rawlins, Thackeray's Novels: A Fiction That is True (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974).

³²Flamm and Olmsted.

³³Ruth apRoberts, "Thackeray Boom: A Review," Costerus, 5, ii (1974), 323, reviewing John Sutherland, Thackeray at Work (London: Athlone Press, 1974).

³⁴J. R. Harvey, "'A Voice Concurrent or Prophetic': The Illustrated Novels of W. M. Thackeray," in Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators (New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1971), pp. 76-102; Donald Hannah, "'The Author's Own Candles': The Significance of the Illustrations to Vanity Fair," in Renaissance and Modern Essays Presented to Vivian de Sola Pinto in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday, ed. G. R. Hibbard with George A. Ponichas and Allan Rodway (London: Routledge & Paul, 1966), pp. 119-27; Teona Tone Gneiting, "The Pencil's Role in Vanity Fair," Huntington Library Quarterly, 39, No. 2 (1976), 171-202; Joan Stevens, "Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" Review of English Literature, 6 (1965), 19-38; and Joan Stevens, "A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager of the Performance,'" Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 22 (1968), 391-97.

³⁵Compiled from Olmsted, pp. 205-15.

CHAPTER II

THE TITLE VANITY FAIR

One must begin with the title. The selection of a title for a work may be of great or little importance to a writer; for Thackeray it was of the utmost importance in Vanity Fair.¹

The initial title of the work was Pen and Pencil Sketches of English Society, which it remained from February or March, 1845, when Thackeray began the first draft of the early chapters, until around January, 1846, when it became The Novel Without a Hero, with Pen and Pencil Sketches the subtitle. Around this time it was accepted for publication in Punch, to begin making its appearance in May, 1846, but this was delayed because "innumerable small jobs" intervened in Thackeray's life. But then, in October or November of 1846, a scant two months before Vanity Fair did begin its run in Punch in January, 1847, and over one and one-half years after his first drafts of early chapters, which he was still revising, making dramatic changes in the process, Thackeray received what must be called an inspiration. Having long "ransacked his brain" for a proper title--his dissatisfaction is reflected in the changes already made by this time--the new title "came upon him unawares, in the middle of the night," as he told a friend to whom he described the incident: "I jumped out of bed and ran three times round my room, uttering as I went, 'Vanity Fair, Vanity Fair, Vanity Fair.'"²

What, we may ask, might Thackeray have found in that title to arouse so much joy? What might such a title accomplish that the earlier ones could not?

First of all, the title was rich in allusion, for it was "the very invocation of a traditional spiritual guidebook like Pilgrim's Progress," as Robert J. Alter says.³ Certainly Thackeray was familiar with Bunyan's allegory, as his eight and one-half years combined at Charterhouse school and Cambridge attest, not to mention his early evangelical training and lifelong friendships with clerics (and, especially, their wives).⁴ And he remained pleased with his choice; as he later wrote a friend, "'Vanity Fair' is undoubtedly the best of my books. It has the best story, and for another thing," he continued, "the title is such a good one, you couldn't have a better."⁵ What is important for us is that the change in title marked a change in Thackeray from only a satirist and parodist to an allegorist as well: it expanded his novel to emphasize something beyond not only the mere surface realism one detects in Pen and Pencil Sketches, but also beyond the satirical and mock-romantic thrust of Novel Without a Hero, to emphasize, in fact, a larger, a yet deeper, more subtle and concealed dimension: that of allegory. As Joseph E. Baker points out, even "his readers recognized that the title was taken from Bunyan's allegory" and were aware of the "overtones of that suggestion" which "enriched the complex harmonies of the novel: it ceased to be merely 'pencil sketches' of nineteenth-century English society and was related to something deeper--it was generalized."⁶ That is, since the "progression from the particular to the general . . . is characteristic of allegorical interpretation," it was allegorized.⁷

Of course, the title alone only suggests that there may be an allegorical dimension in the novel; we need to see if the "overtones of that suggestion" are followed up.

The connections between Vanity Fair and Pilgrim's Progress are not superficial, as Baker explains: "Bunyan's description summarizes the material of the novel. . . . Almost every word suggests a great scene from Thackeray":

Therefore at this fair are all such merchandise sold as houses, lands, trades, places, honors, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights, of all sorts, as whores, bawds, wives, husbands, children, masters, servants, lives, blood, bodies, souls, silver, gold, pearls, precious stones, and what not.

And, moreover, at this fair there are at all times to be seen jugglings, cheats, games, plays, fools, apes, knaves, and rogues, and that of every kind. Here are to be seen, too, and that for nothing, thefts, murders, adulteries, false swearers, and that of a blood-red colour.⁸

But before examining the similarities--and differences--between Thackeray's conception of "vanity" and Bunyan's, we should see how Thackeray developed the moral sense which led him in the direction of allegory.

About the time Thackeray was writing his first halting drafts and revising his title, a major change was occurring in his thinking, not only about his novel, but also about his role as a writer. As Ray explains, events of 1846 in Thackeray's life "had made him examine profoundly both the nature of the society in which he lived and his responsibility as a writer in describing this society."⁹ He "summed up this altered point of view" (in Ray's phrase), in a letter written less than two months after Vanity Fair began to appear in Punch, commenting first on the final paragraph of "The Snobs of England," which he had just finished:

What I mean applies to my own case & that of all of us--who set up as Satirical-Moralists--and having such a vast multitude of readers whom we not only amuse but teach. And indeed, a solemn prayer to God Almighty was in my thoughts that we may never forget truth & Justice and kindness as the great ends of our profession. There's something of the same strain in *Vanity Fair*. A few years ago I should have sneered at the idea of setting up as a teacher at all, and perhaps all this pompous and pious way of talking about a few papers of jokes in *Punch*--but I have got to believe in the business, and in many other things since then. And our profession seems to me to be as serious as the Parson's own.¹⁰

It is clear that the sneering satirist of earlier years has become transformed into the serious "Satirical-Moralist"--or, in other words, a satirical-allegorist. This change should not surprise us, for, as Leyburn says, satire and allegory have not only "similarities in artistic considerations," but also "a basic resemblance in purpose. . . . Both allegorist and satirist are concerned to teach."¹¹ Thus Thackeray, "inspired by these convictions," as Ray argues, "set about revising his 1845 chapters to make them convey his vision of well-to-do England as *Vanity Fair*."¹² And we will see that the shift toward allegory signalled in the title is reinforced by these chapter revisions.

NOTES

¹I am indebted to Ray's account of the genesis of the title in The Uses of Adversity, pp. 384-85, and, for the history of the early chapter drafts to Ray, "Vanity Fair: One Version of the Novelist's Responsibility," and to John Sutherland, "The Expanding Narrative of Vanity Fair," The Journal of Narrative Technique, 3 (1974), 149-69.

²Kate Perry, Manuscript Silver Diary, June 28, 1860, as quoted in Ray, The Uses of Adversity, p. 385.

³Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 127.

⁴See Ray, The Uses of Adversity, pp. 79-100, 115-38, and 132.

⁵Anne Thackeray Ritchie in her biographical edition of her father's Works of Thackeray (London, 1910-1911; rpt. New York: A.M.S. Press, 1968), p. xxxiii.

⁶Joseph E. Baker, "'Vanity Fair' and the Celestial City," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 10 (1955), 89.

⁷Clifford, p. 33.

⁸Baker, 90.

⁹Ray, The Uses of Adversity, p. 385, and for a more thorough discussion, Ray, "One Version."

¹⁰Ray, Letters and Private Papers, II, p. 282.

¹¹Leyburn, p. 8.

¹²The Uses of Adversity, p. 386.

CHAPTER III

THE EARLY CHAPTERS

Although limitations of space as well as other considerations prohibit a thorough examination of these early chapters and revisions,¹ fortunately, the work of both Ray and Sutherland throws as much light on the subject as we need.² As Sutherland has explained, the early 1845 chapters, "the earliest layer to be found in the surviving manuscript," include "basically chapters 1-3, shorter versions of 4 and 6, Becky's correspondence in 8, most of 9 and 10."³ Chapter V, where Dobbin appears, and Chapter VII were written after early 1845. Of great importance to our allegorical reading of the novel are several "afterthought passages of moral commentary"⁴ which are evident in the surviving manuscript which have what Ray calls a "transforming effect" on the novel. Surprising as it may seem, before Vanity Fair Thackeray would "tell his stories substantially without commentary."⁵ But in Vanity Fair Thackeray uses commentary, and he uses it to further the allegory. As Clifford explains, a "common feature of allegorical action [is] commentary upon the narrative"; writing in particular about Gulliver's Travels, Brave New World, and Frankenstein, Clifford notes that "our awareness of the allegorical element in these works derives very much from the thread of commentary coming from an outsider observing the action . . . and this commentary upon the events occurring in some kind of journey is crucial to the integration of the allegorical fiction with its significance."⁶

Yet other revisions in the thirteen surviving manuscript chapters reveal Thackeray's reworking of his early material toward allegory. The revisions of various passages involving Becky especially point this out.

As Sutherland explains, changes which Thackeray made in passages concerning Becky broke the "co-authorial relationship between Becky and Thackeray" which had existed in the earliest drafts.⁷ Sutherland emphasizes, as Ray does in regard to moral commentary, that "Chapter VIII is crucial" in regard to Thackeray's changed attitude toward Becky, for "it was at this point, many months after, that Thackeray felt obliged to add a long end-note sundering his moral standpoint from hers."⁸ It is worth quoting at some length:

And, as we bring our characters forward, I will ask leave, as a man and a brother, not only to introduce them, but occasionally to step down from the platform, and talk about them: if they are good and kindly, to love them and shake them by the hand: if they are silly, to laugh at them confidentially in the reader's sleeve: if they are wicked and heartless, to abuse them in the strongest terms which politeness admits of.

Otherwise you might fancy it was I who was sneering at the practice of devotion, which Miss Sharp finds so ridiculous; that it was I who laughed good-humoredly at the reeling old Silenus of a baronet--whereas the laughter comes from one who has no reverence except for prosperity, and no eye for anything beyond success. Such people there are living and flourishing in the world--Faithless, Hopeless, Charityless; let us have at them, dear friends, with might and main. Some there are, and very successful too, mere quacks and fools: and it was to combat and expose such as those, no doubt, that Laughter was made.⁹

Becky has now become Miss Sharp. She is the faithless, hopeless, charityless one now; furthermore, she always has been.

But there have always been critics who have disagreed, such as the one who charged that the description of Becky in terms of a monster of the deep near the beginning of Chapter LXIV is "not quite fair to its subject, who must pay now belatedly for Thackeray's confusion."¹⁰ It is

almost a commonplace for certain readers to object to Becky's striking of young Rawdy as "out of character." Oddly enough, in fact, and despite all the clues which Thackeray leaves to the contrary, Becky is often regarded as the "heroine" of the novel. Typical is Dorothy Van Ghent's opinion that there are two distinct and poorly integrated centers to the novel, one around Amelia and one around Becky: "Organized around the two centers are two plots, which have as little essentially to do with each other as Thackeray's creative imagination had to do with his sentimental, morally fearful reflections. He cannot bear to allow the wonderfully animated vision of Becky's world to speak for itself, for its meaning is too frightening; he must add to it a complementary world--Amelia's--to act as its judge and corrector."¹¹

Others disagree with Van Ghent's opinion and its implication that Thackeray was smitten with Amelia. J. T. Klein thinks that not only are there "many parallels and contrasts which constitute an active interplay between the two plots," but also that "the assumption that one plot is the corrector or judge of the other . . . is not validated in the text." Neither Becky nor Amelia has the right solutions: "The possibility that Amelia's world might function as a corrective to Becky's world is not borne out because, in her jealousy over Dobbin's fondness for their own daughter, Amelia exhibits the same selfish vanity which has plagued her throughout the novel."¹² Although Becky and Amelia are contrasted throughout the novel, one is not superior to the other, as Thackeray himself was quite aware, as his letter to his mother in July of 1847 makes clear: "Of course you are quite right about Vanity Fair and Amelia, it is mentioned in this very number. My object is not to make a perfect character or anything like it. Don't you see how odious all the people

are in the book (with the exception of Dobbin)--behind whom all there lies a dark moral I hope. What I want is to make a set of people living without God in the world (only that is a cant phrase) greedy pompous mean perfectly self-satisfied for the most part and at ease about about their superior virtue."¹³

Aside from the question of Thackeray's revisions--ignoring his revisions--it does seem clear that in the published version, Becky is, as Bernard J. Paris says, "a monster all along."¹⁴ Even in the first two chapters we can see this, and also that allegory permeates the opening of the novel. The allegorical motifs may have existed in Thackeray's first draft; they certainly do in the final one, which is important for two reasons. The first is that, as Kiely notes, "for Thackeray beginnings are important."¹⁵ The second is that, in allegory, "the main direction of the action is usually signalled at the outset."¹⁶

Chapter I deals with the departure of Becky and Amelia from Miss Pinkerton's Academy at Chiswick Mall. This fact is so obvious that we tend to overlook its significance. We must remember what Clifford says, that "allegorical action often takes the form of a journey, a quest, or a pursuit; this becomes the metaphor by which a process of learning for both protagonists and readers is expressed."¹⁷ Certainly it is not hard to see that pursuit of one vanity or another actuates the major characters in Vanity Fair: Becky pursues Jos and others like Jos in their vulnerability to her--Rawdon, Lord Steyne--throughout the story; Amelia pursues a romantic ideal, George Osborne, even after he is dead until, finally, her false illusions at least partly and temporarily corrected, she, the "tender little parasite," clings to Dobbin, who, traveling across the seas yet once more, finally obtains his queen, though by then

he sees that she is but another member of the court of Vanity Fair.

The novel begins (ignoring "Before the Curtain" for the moment) when there arrives at Miss Pinkerton's Academy a coach pulled by two horses in "blazing harness" driven by a coachman with a "new red waistcoat" accompanied by a black servant who "uncurled his bandy legs" before ringing the bell. Perhaps the harness was always blazing, perhaps waistcoats were always red, perhaps black footmen always uncurled bandy legs; otherwise, the images might seem reminiscent of Satanic symbols in an allegory. But let us read on and not jump to conclusions based on such flimsy evidence. Are there any other religious allusions in the first chapter?

In her letter to Amelia's parents, Miss Pinkerton, after praising Amelia's accomplishments, turns to matters of "religion and morality," and certifies Amelia as "worthy of an establishment honoured by the presence of The Great Lexicographer." Is the close proximity of religion and the "Great Lexicographer" only chance? In fact, Miss Pinkerton thinks of Dr. Johnson as a god--perhaps her God?--"The Lexicographer's name was always on the lips of this majestic lady." Obviously there is satire here, but there is also allegory. For not only does Miss Pinkerton regard Dr. Johnson as her God, she also treats his "Dixonary" as her Holy Book: she will not give one to Becky, although she inscribes one to Amelia. Miss Pinkerton makes a sacred gift of the "Dixonary" as others give--yet today--a Bible, it is safe to say. Still in Chapter I, Amelia, before leaving her "twelve intimate and bosom friends," is led to a snack of "a seed-cake and a bottle of wine"--a mass of blessing before she begins her journey? In any event, it is her last supping--supper?--in Chiswick Mall, and it is of bread and wine. Becky, waiting

alone and friendless in the carriage, is secretly given a smuggled copy of the "Dixonary" from Miss Jemima, who, after saying "God bless you!" then "retreated into the garden."¹⁸ As the coach pulls out, however, Becky "actually flung the book back into the garden."¹⁹ If not a garden of Eden, it is at least a garden of innocence, for, as Chapter I ends, the girls begin their journey: "The carriage rolled away; the great gates were closed; the bell rang for the dancing lesson. The world is before the two young ladies; and so, farewell to Chiswick Mall."

In Chapter II the same hidden commentary is continued and the underlying religious imagery used to characterize Becky is further developed. When Becky says, "So much for the Dixonary; and, thank God, I'm out of Chiswick," the irreverence which characterizes her statement is apparent to Amelia, who says, "Hush!" Unrepentant, Becky replies that, for all she cares, the black footman "may go back and tell Miss Pinkerton that I hate her with all my soul." (All her soul.) Becky then goes on to praise Napoleon in terms certainly blasphemous: "Thank Heaven for the French. Vive la France! Vive l'Empereur! Vive Bonaparte!"²⁰ Again Amelia is shocked, for, as the narrator explains, "in those days, in England, to say, 'Long live Bonaparte!' was as much as to say, 'Long live Lucifer!'" This is the first overt identification of Becky with Satan; we will see more.²¹ How Becky can have such "wicked, revengeful thoughts" again astounds Amelia. "'Revenge may be wicked, but it's natural,' answered Miss Rebecca. 'I'm no angel.' And, to say the truth, she certainly was not," Thackeray's narrator concurs.

Does Becky say "angel" only because it is a cliché? Perhaps. But could that word not also constitute yet one more element in a sustained metaphor based on religious allusions as the vehicle, a metaphor in

which Becky is shown to be "living without God in the world"? It seems appropriate here to recall what Leyburn points out, that "The commonest definition [of allegory] in current handbooks and dictionaries is 'sustained metaphor.'" ²² Even by this restrictive and mechanistic definition, does allegory not animate the opening pages of Vanity Fair? Indeed, these early passages clearly show what Thackeray was about: it is obvious that his portrayal of Becky's character "means something other" than what may appear on the surface, that "wonderfully animated vision of Becky's world." Yet Thackeray, as if aware that his subtleties might be passed over--his allegory ignored--drives home the point in the next sentence following the "angel" passage: "For it may be remarked in the course of this little conversation (which took place as the coach rolled along lazily by the river side) that though Miss Rebecca Sharp has twice had occasion to thank Heaven, it has been, in the first place, for ridding her of some person whom she hated, and secondly, for enabling her to bring her enemies to some sort of perplexity or confusion; neither of which are very amiable motives for religious gratitude. . . ."

There are yet more references in Chapter II to Becky's kinship with Lucifer. After Becky demands more money from Miss Pinkerton if she is to teach music as well as French, Miss Pinkerton reflects, "I have nourished a viper in my bosom," a symbol certainly not unknown in Thackeray's time as representative of evil. And poor Becky's response? "Rebecca laughed in her face, with a horrid sarcastic demoniacal laughter. . . ." It is striking that these passages have not been commented on as allegorical, even overtly allegorical; yet there are more, still in Chapter II. The following passage, concerning Miss Pinkerton's dilemma, seems to have been written as an echo of Milton: "In order to maintain authority in

her school, it became necessary to remove the rebel, this monster, this serpent, this firebrand," Miss Sharp. Thus Miss Pinkerton "actually recommended" Becky as governess in Sir Pitt Crawley's home, Queen's Crawley, "firebrand and serpent as she was" notwithstanding. In fact, Miss Pinkerton rationalizes, "as far as the head goes, at least, she does credit" to her school. Thackeray's diction--"viper," "serpent," "firebrand"--and the implied head-heart dichotomy which he sets up are both, one must agree, no mere chance. (Furthermore, the similarity to motifs used by Hawthorne in his allegories is unmistakable. Of course, one need not insist that one served as the source for the other--rather it is likely that their use of the same images is the result of the two writers' joint inheritance from the culture, steeped in its religious traditions as both were--but, nonetheless, a study comparing the two might be quite revealing of similarities heretofore unnoticed or unnoted.)

There is practically no physical description of Becky in this or any other chapter (although the illustrations throughout the novel depict her clearly and reveal her essentially evil character, as will be discussed later). The brief description which is in Chapter II is quickly followed up, even in the same sentence, with an anecdote which again portrays Becky as an enemy of Christianity:

She was small and slight in person; pale, sandy-haired, and with eyes habitually cast down: when they looked up they were very large, odd, and attractive; so attractive, that the Reverend Mr. Crisp, fresh from Oxford, and curate to the Vicar of Chiswick, the Reverend Mr. Flowerdew, fell in love with Miss Sharp; being shot dead by a glance of her eyes which was fired all the way across Chiswick Church from the school-pew to the reading desk. This infatuated young man . . . actually proposed something like marriage in an intercepted note. . . . Miss Pinkerton . . . never could thoroughly believe the young lady's protestations that she had never exchanged a single

word with Mr. Crisp, except under her own eyes on the two occasions when she had met him at tea.

Nor can we believe Becky's protestations. It is clear what Thackeray means to imply by the phrase "something like marriage": Becky has already seduced, if not yet lain with, the now corrupted young minister. The meaning of this incident cannot be misconstrued; there is no ambiguity here; it was not just any young man Becky perverted, but a man of God: her alliance with Satan is unquestionable.

Although it is theoretically possible to trace throughout the novel the Satanic images and allusions which adhere to Becky, such a detailed compendium would only belabor the point. Rather it should be sufficient to note a passage quite late in the novel which has caused consternation among several. As noted before, it appears near the beginning of Chapter LXIV, only three chapters from the end; so late in the novel, so long, and so graphic, it cannot be a "mistake" made by Thackeray. More importantly for us, it fulfills all of the sinister implications of the opening chapters:

I defy any one to say that our Becky, who has certainly some vices, has not been presented to the public in a perfectly genteel and inoffensive manner. In describing this siren, singing and smiling, coaxing and cajoling, the author, with modest pride, asks his readers all round, has he once forgotten the laws of politeness, and showed the monster's hideous tail above water? No! Those who like may peep down under waves that are pretty transparent, and see it writhing and twirling, diabolically hideous and slimy, flapping among bones, or curling around corpses; but above the water-line, I ask, has not everything been proper, agreeable, and decorous, and has any the most squeamish immoralist in Vanity Fair a right to cry fie? When, however, the siren disappears and dives below, down among the dead men, the water of course grows turbid over her, and it is labour lost to look into it ever so curiously. They look pretty enough when they sit upon a rock, twanging their harps and combing their hair, and sing, and beckon to you to come and hold the looking-glass; but when they sink into their native element, depend on it those mermaids are about no good, and we had best not

examine the fiendish marine cannibals, revelling and feasting on their wretched pickled victims.

This description of Becky reminds one of nothing as much as it does of Leviathan: "In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall punish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1). It is also clear that Thackeray is having a little fun with his readers: the perceptive ones will undoubtedly see the irony of his two questions; the unperceptive will remain--unperceptive. Some, of course, will not be able to see below the water-line and plunge into the allegory which Thackeray has been writing from the first, but they can be entertained on the surface level, as Fletcher reminds us:

The whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically; it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself. But somehow this literal surface suggests a peculiar doubleness of intention, and while it can, as it were, get along without interpretation, it becomes much richer and more interesting if given interpretation. Even the most deliberate fables, if read naively or carelessly, may seem mere stories, but what counts in our discussion is a structure that lends itself to a secondary reading, or rather, one that becomes stronger when given a secondary meaning as well as a primary meaning.²³

The secondary meaning in Vanity Fair which we have been tracing in regard to Becky's characterization does make the novel "much richer and more interesting."

NOTES

¹Some 110 pages of the MS of the opening part of the novel survive and are kept in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, which it was physically impossible to examine personally.

²Ray, "One Version," and Sutherland, "Expanding Narrative."

³"Expanding Narrative," 150.

⁴Especially the last six paragraphs of Chapter VIII; see "Expanding Narrative."

⁵Ray, "One Version," p. 250.

⁶Clifford, p. 25; 26.

⁷"Expanding Narrative," 152.

⁸"Expanding Narrative," 154.

⁹Since there are so many different editions of Vanity Fair, it seemed better to identify passages by location within chapters rather than by page number of a particular edition.

¹⁰Russell A. Fraser, "Pernicious Casuistry: A Study of Character in Vanity Fair," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 12 (1957), 142.

¹¹The English Novel: Form and Function (New York, 1953; rpt. New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 142.

¹²"The Dual Center: A Study of Narrative Structure in Vanity Fair," College Literature, 4 (1977), 123, 124.

¹³Letters and Private Papers, II, p. 309.

¹⁴A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky and Conrad (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973), p. 85.

¹⁵Robert Kiely, "Victorian Harlequin: The Function of Humor in Thackeray's Critical and Miscellaneous Prose," in Veins of Humor, ed. Harry Levin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), p. 150.

¹⁶Clifford, p. 15.

¹⁷Clifford, p. 16.

¹⁸Perhaps Thackeray is being satirical here more than allegorical, for he refers to what he calls the "felicitous" use of the word "garden" in modern times in the first paragraph of Chapter LX: "'Cardens' was a felicitous word not applied to stucco houses with asphalt terraces in front, so early as 1827."

¹⁹For the use of garden imagery in Vanity Fair, see Robert E. Lougy, "Vision and Satire: The Warped Looking Glass in Vanity Fair," PMLA, 90 (1975), 256-69.

²⁰Becky is later identified with Napoleon in the pictorial capital to Chapter LXIV, which begins with the siren of the deep passage; Thackeray's anti-French bias is well-known, as Kiely attests when he says that in the Paris Sketch Book Thackeray's "English prejudice bursts unpleasantly to the surface" (Kiely, p. 155).

²¹The first in the text, that is; the pictorial capital beginning this chapter makes the same identification, as will be shown shortly.

²²Leyburn, p. 5.

²³Fletcher, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

THACKERAY'S ILLUSTRATIONS

Yet another element in the novel which provides an additional meaning, an allegorical dimension, is that of Thackeray's own illustrations to Vanity Fair.

Although Thackeray has been dead over one hundred years, little thorough study of his illustrations has been done until recently, despite the fact that he studied for a few years in the early 1830's to be a painter, in Paris as well as in England. He also, from the beginning of his career as a writer for the magazines, illustrated many of his own works as well as that of some others; once, in fact, he offered his services to Dickens to illustrate *The Pickwick Papers*, but, Thackeray later explained, "strange to say, he did not find suitable" Thackeray's sample sketches.¹

Nevertheless, several contemporary and later writers commented favorably on Thackeray's illustrations. In 1864, the year after Thackeray's death, Henry Kingsley noted how functional were Thackeray's illustrations in Vanity Fair: "Another point about this wonderful book . . . is the way in which the author has illustrated it. For the first time we found a novelist illustrating his own books well. . . . He used these wonderful woodcuts, as most novelists use the titles to their chapters, as a key to the text--as a means of forcing home his moral, not only on the ear but on the eye."² In the same year, John Brown, in the North British

Review, concurred: "He is, as far as we recollect, the only great author who illustrated his own works. This gives a singular completeness to the result. When his pen has said his say, then comes his pencil and adds its own felicity . . . how complete is the duet between the eye and the mind, between word and figure."¹³ Perhaps none of his contemporaries was more profuse in praise of Thackeray's illustrations than Charlotte Bronte: "You will not easily find a second Thackeray. How he can render, with a few black lines and dots, shades of expression so fine, so real; traits of character so minute, so subtle, so difficult to seize and fix, I cannot tell--I can only wonder and admire. Thackeray may not be a painter, but he is a wizard of a draughtsman; touched with his pencil, paper lives. . . . All is true in Thackeray. If Truth were again a goddess, Thackeray should be her high priest."⁴

Not until 1965, however, when the first of Joan Stevens' articles on Thackeray's illustrations appeared, were his illustrations thoroughly studied. In addition to her work, significant contributions have been made by Donald Hannah, J. R. Harvey, and Teona Tone Gneiting, among others.⁵

The first point to be made about the illustrations in Vanity Fair is that they belong to that period during which Thackeray revised his early drafts. Joan Stevens' examination of the thirteen surviving manuscript chapters reveals that "throughout the MS. there are corrections and revisions. All the notes and alterations associated with the illustrations are in the upright hand" which Thackeray used in the later drafts.⁶

Holding in abeyance for the moment the two full-page illustrations which now adorn the cover and title page of the bound novel, we see that

the illustrations to Chapter I support our allegorical reading. The pictorial capital (Figure 1) and the closing illustration (Figure 2) both develop the motif of the journey--quite common in allegory, as we have seen--for, instead of depicting Becky or Amelia as we might suppose, the two illustrations depict the arrival and departure of a coach. Also within this chapter is an engraving which is quite important and which even, in Gneiting's opinion, "sets the tone for the rest of the work." This illustration, near the end of the first chapter, depicts the scene in which Becky flings Johnson's "Dixonary" back into the garden (Figure 3). As Gneiting explains, instead of "the pale face of a suffering heroine" we see "instead, a face pale with anger and malice--eyebrows slanted together in a grimace of hatred and vindictiveness making the eyes mere squints, nose pointed upwards, lips pursed, and chin jutting out as her hand peevishly flings the book."⁷ Furthermore, a little girl, certainly a symbol of innocence, stands by the gate, her hands to her face, crying, in response to Becky's display of pride; even in her first illustration, Becky is contrasted with what is good.

Chapter II then begins with a pictorial capital which is especially noteworthy, in that it occurs in the middle of the opening Satanic imagery attached to Becky, which spans the two chapters. This illustration, however, has not been properly interpreted before (Figure 4). For example, Stevens believes that the twelve woodcuts in the first Number, Chapters I through IV, are "all decorative rather than functional, as was to be expected since none is indicated in the MS."⁸ Harvey describes the illustration as "an initial 'W' supported by the head and shoulders of a satyr; it is a small rococo decoration of no significance."⁹ Quite the opposite is true; it supports the imagery which we have found in the

CHAPTER I.

CHISWICK MALL.



WHILE the present century was in its teens, and on one sunshiny morning in June, there drove up to the great iron gate of Miss Pinkerton's academy for young ladies, on Chiswick Mall, a large family coach, with two fat horses in blazing harness, driven by a fat coachman in a three-cornered hat and wig, at the rate of four miles an hour. A black servant, who reposed on the box beside the fat coachman, uncurled his bandy legs as soon as the equipage drew up opposite Miss Pinkerton's shining brass plate, and as he pulled the bell, at least a score of young heads were seen peering out of the narrow windows of the stately old brick house. Nay, the acute observer might have recognised the little red nose of good-natured Miss Jemima Pinkerton herself, rising over some geranium-pots in the window of that lady's own drawing-room.

"It is Mrs. Sedley's coach, sister," said Miss Jemima. "Sambo, the black servant, has just rung the bell; and the coachman has a new red waistcoat."

Figure 1. Chapter I Pictorial Capital



Figure 2. Chapter I Tailpiece



Rebecca's Farewell.

Figure 3. "Rebecca's Farewell"



WHEN Miss Sharp had performed the heroic act mentioned in the last chapter, and had seen the Dixonary, flying over the pavement of the little garden, fall at length at the feet of the astonished Miss Jemima, the young lady's countenance, which had before worn an almost livid look of hatred, assumed a smile that perhaps was scarcely more agreeable, and she sank back in the carriage in an easy frame of mind, saying—"So much for the Dixonary; and, thank God, I'm out of Chiswick."

Figure 4. Chapter II Pictorial Capital

first two chapters, just as that imagery supports the illustration. That both Stevens and Harvey have missed the significance of this pictorial capital is an ironic testament to Thackeray's subtlety in both text and picture, for both scholars have exhibited remarkable insight elsewhere, and are quite well aware that, as Harvey says, "In Vanity Fair Thackeray demonstrates a remarkable aptitude in integrating text and picture."¹⁰

One may choose to call the figure a "satyr"--an attendant of Bacchus--if one wants. It seems, however, more reasonable to see the figure for what he is: a devil, if not Lucifer himself. In any event, the illustration yet more closely identifies Becky with Satan, an identification which the text surrounding it also makes. The allegory of Vanity Fair exists both in the words and in the pictures.

Another illustration we might note is that which depicts Sir Pitt on his knees proposing to Becky (Figure 5), the famous ending to one of the monthly Numbers (and of Chapter XIV) where Becky says, "Oh, sir--I--I'm married already." Chapter XV, which begins the next monthly number, begins in this way: "Every reader of a sentimental turn (and we desire no other) must have been pleased with the tableau with which the last act of our little drama concluded; for what can be prettier than an image of Love on his knees before Beauty?" The irony of Thackeray's words is quite obvious: Sir Pitt is old enough to be Becky's father--he is the father of her husband--and is bald, pot-bellied, and possessed of no culture, as his uneducated speech humorously indicates; and Becky, with her "odd" eyes, is not an ideal of Beauty. As Stevens says: "These words explicitly recall the final woodcut of the previous Number, and the dramatic moment to which it gave visible substance. There was such a tableau, there was such an image. This is satirically biting, for if



"Oh, Sir Pitt!" she said. "Oh, sir—I—I'm married already."

Figure 5. Sir Pitt on His Knees



VERY reader of a sentimental turn (and we desire no other) must have been pleased with the *tableau* with which the last act of our little drama concluded; for what can be prettier than an image of Love on his knees before Beauty?

Figure 6. Chapter XV Pictorial Capital

Becky is Beauty, then that old satyr Pitt must be Love, and we are indeed in 'Vanity Fair.'"¹¹ But this illustration is also allegorically meaningful, as indicated by the contrast made to it by the pictorial capital "E" which begins Chapter XV (Figure 6). Harvey explains how this contrast works:

For the capital 'E' shows a figure--apparently a boy in medieval costume--on his knees, with his face in his hands, before a sculptured figure on a pedestal. The picture is a delicate reminder that the idea of 'Love on his Knees before Beauty' can have an unironical meaning as well as the ironic one. . . . That picture, in its firmness and clarity, gives an additional weight to Thackeray's opening sentence, and modifies the tone in which we should read it. It also gives the total contrast more symmetry, for now picture is opposed to picture and prose to prose; the contrast gaining weight when the Numbers are¹² bound together in a volume, and the pictures face each other.

Harvey's description may be correct, but the illustration may be of a girl rather than a boy; regardless of that, however, the child seems--to be in a church, before a statue which, if one may judge by the folds in the garment and the foot visible beneath them, is of Mary. Although this is speculation, it does seem to have some likelihood, for what, or who, in medieval times, if not also in Thackeray's, is a greater symbol of beauty than Mary? This reading of the picture is further substantiated by the appearance in it, curling around the edge of the "E," and leering at the girl yet another devil-figure. Harvey refers to this figure as a "malicious imp . . . but he is clearly separated from the actual picture."¹³ Assuming that Harvey is using the word "imp" in its strictest definition, as the devil's offspring, he is correct; he is not correct, however, in implying that the figure plays no part in the illustration. This is yet another example of how Thackeray presents Becky in contrast to traditional religious virtues by linking her with Satanic imagery, either in words or in picture, or in both. This pictorial

capital not only mirrors that of Chapter II, then, but also reminds us of the very first illustration in the novel proper, when Becky flung the "Dixonary" back into the garden. The same attitude is portrayed in the little girls in both illustrations: both have hidden their faces in their hands, as if overwhelmed by something monstrously evil next to them. In the pictorial capital, it is a devil who is in the same position in the overall composition of the illustration that Becky occupies in the picture at the end of Chapter XIV and also in the picture in Chapter I: she is in the upper left of both pictures, looking down on the principal(s) in the pictures, just as the devil looks down on the child.

Lest these conclusions seem too speculative, it must be pointed out that other illustrations in the novel have been singled out in a like manner. Gneiting, for example, has said of the "Vignette Title Page" published with the final "Double Number" in July, 1848 (an illustration we will return to) that, "The minute iconography of this picture is reminiscent of Hogarth--almost every detail is pregnant with meaning."¹⁴ And Harvey, speaking of the pictorial capitals in general, says that Thackeray "finds functions for them that extend far beyond those of the naturalistic illustrations. . . . [They show] in imaginative use of visual irony and analogy unhindered by any need to depict a 'real' scene."¹⁵ Harvey is incorrect about the illustrations, as has been shown: they too are often full of "analogy"--or, to use a term quite as accurate and more in keeping with our discoveries, allegory.

The contrast which Thackeray continually presents between Becky and traditional Christian virtues which he achieves by identifying her with Satanic images provides with a solution to the still continuing dilemma

concerning Thackeray's supposed attempt to present in the "Becky plot" and the "Amelia plot" opposing solutions to the problem of how to live in *Vanity Fair*. An opposition means that the two are poles apart, or, in a circle, 180 degrees apart. In *Vanity Fair*, however, Becky and Amelia are not separated by 180 degrees--perhaps 90, or 45, but not 180. Rather, the character who most often contrasts with Becky most fully--the character who is closest to an exact opposition, 180 degrees from Becky--is Dobbin.

The sharp contrast between them is revealed in both text and illustrations. Dobbin is introduced in Chapter V as a shy, timid dreamer who enjoys "spelling over a favourite copy of the Arabian Nights"; Becky, on the other hand, as we saw in Chapter II, "never had been a girl, she said; she had been a woman since she was eight years old." The relationship of the two to young children is also revealing of the contrast between them: since he was often much older than his classmates because of his apparent dullness, "There was no little fellow but had his jeer and joke at Dobbin; and he bore everything quite patiently, and was entirely dumb and miserable." And later, of course, Dobbin becomes Georgie Osborne's champion in the fight with Cuff. Becky, however, never likes children, even those she tutors: "She had no soft maternal heart, this unlucky girl, otherwise the prattle and talk of the younger children, with whose care she was chiefly intrusted, might have soothed and interested her; but she lived among them two years, and not one was sorry that she went away." By the time Becky strikes young Rawdy, we have been long-prepared to accept it. Did she not cause a young girl to cry when she threw the "Dixonary" in her very first illustration?

The first illustration of Dobbin, on the other hand, shows him reclining beneath a tree reading a book (Figure 7). Beyond this minor point, however, the pictorial capital to Chapter V shows two little boys engaged in a make-believe battle (Figure 8). Dobbin's interest in fairy tales certainly links him with one of these boys, the one on the ground reaching up to strike the other boy on the rocking horse. The third illustration of Dobbin, still in Chapter V (Figure 9), shows him being introduced to Amelia, and how different his shyness and deference in her presence is from Becky's arrogance when she persists in shocking Amelia with her blasphemies. As Gneiting says, the three illustrations in Chapter V "work together to introduce Dobbin as a quixotic hero." Furthermore, "Dobbin's introduction to Amelia is very important in this context because she becomes his Dulcinea, his idol, his ideal image of perfect womanhood."¹⁶

There is one illustration in the novel which associates Dobbin with religious images, and thereby contrasts him with Becky yet once more. This illustration, at the end of Chapter XXXV, shows Dobbin leaving Amelia (Figure 10). Entitled "Major Sugarplums"--little Mary Clapp, daughter of John Sedley's clerk who took the Sedleys into his home after their financial failure, calls Dobbin "Major Sugarplums"--the illustration does have an allegorical element. Gneiting describes the scene:

Amelia is seated, holding Little George on her lap; they appear much like a traditional "Madonna and Child," with little Mary holding the usual position of St. John in the tableau. Dobbin is standing, bearing gifts for the child of his goddess, although she is completely absorbed in her own cares--an attitude not untypical of ladies in courtly romances. The combination of courtly and Christian imagery in this scene helps to show that Dobbin is worshipping a false god, or rather goddess--a point that Thackeray makes abundantly clear in both text and illustration to [Chapter XLIII]. After ten years of separation Dobbin still has "but one idea



Figure 7. Young Dobbin Reading



Figure 8. Chapter V
Pictorial
Capital



Figure 9. Dobbin Meets Amelia



Major Sugarplums.

Figure 10. "Major Sugarplums"

of a woman in his head . . . a soft young mother tending an infant and beckoning [him] up to look at him." Thackeray suggests, however, that "perhaps Dobbin's sentimental Amelia was no more like the real one than [an] absurd little print which he cherished."¹⁷

The last three illustrations in the novel (two full-page ones and the final tailpiece), which appear in the final chapter, LXVII, complete the contrasts between the representatives of vice and virtue, Becky and Dobbin.

The first of this trio, "Becky's second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra," has been fully discussed by Gneiting (Figure 11). It shows Dobbin listening to Jos' fearful pleading with Dobbin to "come and live near me, and--and--see me sometimes." Then Jos pleads with Dobbin not to tell Becky that he might go back to India, for "she'd--she'd kill me if she knew it. You don't know what a terrible woman she is." The irony here is that, unknown to either Jos or Dobbin--or the reader who is not fortunate enough to have an illustrated edition--Becky overhears all, hiding behind a curtain; thus the illustration offers some evidence --perhaps sufficient--that Becky did actually kill Jos, as Gneiting explains:

Becky's presence in the room is never once mentioned in the text. A person reading an unillustrated edition of Vanity Fair . . . would miss the implications intended by the title of the picture itself. Becky's first appearance as Clytemnestra had been in the charade at Lord Steyne's house where she stabbed Rawdon's Agamemnon "with such ghastly truth, that the spectators were all dumb" and Lord Steyne was prompted to say, "By---, she'd do it too." Becky's subsequent behavior with Steyne is, of course, the ultimate cause of Rawdon's death just as surely as if she had stabbed him. Likewise, she is the cause of Joseph's death just as surely as if she had stabbed him.¹⁸

The second illustration contrasts Becky and Dobbin more strongly. Again the title is ironic: "Virtue rewarded; A booth in Vanity Fair" (Figure 12). In the booth sits Becky, with downcast eyes and a cynical



Becky's second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra

Figure 11. "Becky's Second Appearance in the Character of Clytemnestra"



Virtue rewarded; A booth in Vanity Fair.

Figure 12. "Virtue Rewarded, A Booth in Vanity Fair"

smile, looking down at little Janey, whose expression is one of curiosity about Becky. Dobbin and young George are staring grimly at Becky's apparent attempt to ingratiate herself with Janey, while Amelia, back turned to Becky, looks over her shoulder at her pensively. Thackeray describes the scene in the text: "She [Becky] cast down her eyes demurely and smiled as they started away from her; Emmy skurrying off on the arm of George (now grown a dashing young gentleman), and the Colonel seizing up his little Janey, of whom he is fonder than of anything in the world. . . ." The irony of the title is that the virtuous ones are outside the booth; their reward is each other. Becky's reward for her "virtue" consists in tokens of relationships she has had but which now are dead: some pictures, a pair of baby booties hanging on the wall, and, on the counter within her reach, a doll--perhaps the doll which Miss Pinkerton gave her years before when Becky and her father visited the Academy, the doll which Becky used to ridicule Miss Pinkerton with as she and her father made their way home? Or perhaps it is no doll, but only a puppet, stiff and lifeless, as Stevens believes.¹⁹

The final illustration in the novel, the tailpiece to Chapter LXVII, will be considered shortly; however, before that, the last paragraph of the novel should be examined for its allegorical significance: "Ah! Vanitas Vanitatum! which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?--Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out."

This final passage seems unduly pessimistic to some readers--usually the same ones who object to Thackeray's "intrusiveness." Bernard J. Paris sums up this objection: "Thackeray's sense of the hopelessness of all solutions contained within the novel, combined with his inability to

see beyond them, leads him at the end to a position of detachment. . . . This [final paragraph in the novel], which is so jarring to our sense of the novel's moral and artistic earnestness, is perfectly in keeping with the resigned defense which protects us from our conflicts and our feelings of futility and despair by viewing the human scene from a distance, with a detached amusement."²⁰

There is no disagreement with the view that the narrator of Vanity Fair is detached; what this means, however--whether it is good or bad, to be praised or damned--is another matter. If the novel is an allegory, this detachment would be quite appropriate, for in allegory we are confronted with, as Leyburn says, "the impression of detachment on the part of the author."²¹ Clifford concurs; he explains how this detachment works in Troilus and Criseyde, in Chaucer's dialogue with his readers:

This dialogue with the audience . . . is not aimed at asserting either the reality of the characters or the truthfulness of the author's record of them. It specifically deflects us from thinking only about the particular way in which one individual fell in love and suffered for it, and makes us attend to a more general view of loving: why we do it, how it affects us and our view of the world, how it relates to other experiences and values. The acknowledgement of the artifice of the work, its status as only one way of looking at the world, liberates us from the particular into the general. Such a movement is of course also characteristic of allegory.²²

Such a movement is also characteristic of Vanity Fair. As Roger M. Swanson says of Thackeray, "the portrait he paints is not so much the individual and the idiosyncratic as the universal and the general."²³

Aside from the movement toward the general, the last paragraph also alludes, in "Vanitas Vanitatum," to something particular: vanity, specifically, one assumes, to the same vanity in the title.

As discussed earlier, the title is taken from Bunyan's episode in Pilgrim's Progress; each time the word vanity appears in the novel--

scores of times, perhaps a hundred or more--one assumes that it is with Bunyan's meaning. However, only on the final page do we fully understand the context of the word: this vanity is the vanity of Ecclesiastes, not Bunyan.

J. J. Dooley has explained the subtle differences in the meaning of "vanity" as it appears in Bunyan, Ecclesiastes, Augustine, and others, and as it appears in Vanity Fair. He concludes that Thackeray's use of the term varies: "Thackeray does not invoke one clear and unambiguous moral tradition . . . he could not stick to the scales provided by any one of them. . . . With his ability to look at a question from many sides, he was not likely to overlook the vanity of that excessive moral scrupulousness which sees nothing good under the sun."²⁴ The last phrase is an allusion to Ecclesiastes (Eccl.1:3: "What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun," for example), which Dooley does not think provides the sole context for Thackeray's use of "vanity." But A. E. Dyson only partly agrees: "Though Thackeray has nothing of Bunyan's clear-cut doctrine to depend upon, he shares the occasional mood of a Wisdom writer."²⁵ And Robert E. Lougy goes even further when he says that the "Vanitas Vanitatum" quotation illustrates the "most obvious and pervasive" major motif in the novel.²⁶

Perhaps the apparent disagreement can best be explained not by saying that one is more correct than another, but by recognizing that in Ecclesiastes the attitude of the preacher, Koheleth, shifts somewhat. As Robert Gordis says, "Almost from the beginning, readers of Koheleth were troubled by the inconsistencies and contradictions in which the book apparently abounded"; and only in the recent decades has there come about "a growing recognition of its basic unity."²⁷ Thus it is

understandable if one not versed in the appropriate scholarship might tend to oversimplify--or overcomplicate--Ecclesiastes. Furthermore, the unit of Ecclesiastes is somewhat elusive, for, as Gordis explains, the book is composed of the author's various--and varying--reflections: "they differ in mood, in style, and in length. Hence there is no logical progression of thought to be found in the book, and efforts to find it lead to a far-fetched exegesis. Nor can the book be regarded as concerned with a single topic. Its unity is not one of logical progression, but of mood and world-view. Like so much of Jewish literature, it is organic, not syllogistic in structure."²⁸ And yet undoubtedly the theme of Ecclesiastes is "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."²⁹ Is this also the theme of Vanity Fair? Perhaps--with qualification. The reason for the qualification is that for Thackeray "vanity" is not, as in Bunyan, always a thing of evil; it is only something unavoidable, as the following passage from the first paragraph of Chapter LI illustrates:

It is all vanity to be sure: but who will not own to liking a little of it? I should like to know what well-constituted mind, merely because it is transitory, dislikes roast beef? That is a vanity; but may every man who reads this, have a wholesome portion of it through life, I beg: aye, though my readers were five hundred thousand. Sit down, gentlemen, and fall to, with a good hearty appetite; the fat, the lean, the gravy, the horse-radish as you like it--don't spare it. Another glass of wine, Jones, my boy--a little bit of the Sunday side. Yet, let us eat our fill of the vain thing, and be thankful therefore. And let us make the best of Becky's aristocratic pleasures likewise--for these too, like all other mortal delights, were but transitory.

This is not the evil vanity of Pilgrim's Progress, and it might appear that Thackeray is more indulgent of "vanities" than is Ecclesiastes. Yet the following from Ecclesiastes expresses the same sentiment, and in almost the same terms: "Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all

his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion" (5:18). There are also other affinities between Ecclesiastes and Vanity Fair. Gordis finds in Ecclesiastes a "refusal to pretend certainty where none is to be had" and an "emphasis upon man's incapacity to penetrate to the absolute truth."³⁰ In Vanity Fair the narrator quite often asks, "But who can tell you the real truth of the matter?" (Chapter II), or some variant. The reason for such questions is not because of some kind of coyness or archness on Thackeray's part, but because he, like Koheleth, refuses to pretend certainty where there is none, a point which those who persist in calling him an "omniscient" author miss, consequently charging Thackeray with inconsistency.

Thackeray's standpoint is not one of superiority; rather, if all is vanity, so also is the narrator, and the author. This point of view, in which Thackeray's moral perspective is no better than ours, is the result of his theme, "Vanitas Vanitatum"; it is also conveyed in the illustrations, four in particular.

The first we should discuss is the tailpiece at the end of the novel, which appears just below the last paragraph, where the puppet metaphor is stated explicitly for the first and only time, aside from in "Before the Curtain."

In this illustration two little girls are kneeling before an opened trunk, with a look of melancholy on their faces as they prepare to shut the lid (Figure 13). In the box are the vague outlines of a few puppets, and a clear picture of three puppets: one man puppet, who stands behind a woman puppet, who stands behind a child puppet. The clear implication is that these puppets represent Dobbin, Amelia, and their daughter, Jane.

Emmy, her children, and the Colonel, coming to London some time back, found themselves suddenly before her at one of these fairs. She cast down her eyes demurely and smiled as they started away from her; Emmy skurrying off on the arm of George (now grown a dashing young gentleman), and the Colonel seizing up his little Janey, of whom he is fonder than of anything in the world—fonder even than of his "History of the Punjaub."

"Fonder than he is of me," Emmy thinks, with a sigh. But he never said a word to Amelia that was not kind and gentle; or thought of a want of hers that he did not try to gratify.

Ah! *Vanitas Vanitatum!* which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?—Come, children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.



Figure 13. Final Tailpiece

On the floor outside the box are three puppets, none of which is visible to the two little girls. One is a fat man puppet on his back with his stiff legs in the air propped up against the box, a posture which suggests not only death but an unnatural one; this is undoubtedly Jos. Also on the floor, excluded from the comforting scene of the trio in the box who are standing and looking directly at the reader, is a woman puppet who strongly resembles Becky; it must be she. The fact that Becky and Jos are both outside the box and will still be there after the box is closed indicates that they will always be excluded from the virtuous; they will forever remain in Vanity Fair. This conclusion, and perhaps also that Becky did kill Jos,³¹ is further supported by yet another element in this drawing. For draped partially over Becky is a jester's head--not a kindly, benevolent one, but a leering, macabre, wide-eyed, tooth-bared, behorned puppet: a devil. Interestingly, Stevens, who does not otherwise isolate the devil imagery which is connected to Becky throughout the story in both text and picture, was nonetheless perceptive enough to be struck by the obviously unmistakable resemblance of this third puppet to the devil, and, in doing so, Stevens fortuitously if unintentionally supports what we have been seeing all along of the identification of Becky with Lucifer, for Stevens describes this puppet as what it clearly is, "a devil figure who has her in his grasp."³² If Becky has taken her victims, so does the devil take Becky as his due.

But if Becky is shown throughout the novel to be an evil puppet, this final drawing reveals that all of the other characters are puppets as well. More than that, they are all fools, as Dobbin finally realizes he has been, almost halfway through the final chapter:

It was gone indeed. William had spent it all out. He loved her no more, he thought, as he had loved her. He never could again. That sort of regard, which he had proffered to her for so many faithful years can't be flung down and shattered and mended so as to show no scars. The little heedless tyrant had so destroyed it. No, William thought again and again, "It was myself I deluded, and persisted in cajoling; had she been worthy of the love I gave her, she would have returned it long ago. It was a fond mistake. Isn't the whole course of life made up of such? and suppose I had won her, should I not have been disenchanted the day after my victory?"

Of course, it is just at this time that Amelia realizes her error, and finally, belatedly, returns Dobbin's love, and the allegory of their transformation from fully fools to only partial fools--at least temporarily--is described in terms of a journey, appropriately enough:

The vessel is in port. He has got the prize he has been trying for all his life. The bird has come in at last. There it is with its head on his shoulder, billing and cooing close up to his heart, with soft outstretched fluttering wings. This is what he has asked for every day and hour for eighteen years. This is what he pined after. Here it is--the summit, the end--the last page of the third volume. Good-bye, Colonel.--God bless you, honest William!--Farewell, dear Amelia.--Grow green again, tender little parasite, round the rugged old oak to which you cling!

But by this time, even Amelia realizes that Dobbin has changed, and is beyond her: she can never have the hold on him that she did before. For in the last paragraphs of the novel, we witness the scene in which Dobbin is "seizing up his little Janey, of whom he is fonder than of anything in the world--fonder even than of his 'History of the Punjaub.' 'Fonder than he is of me,' Emmy thinks, with a sigh. But he never said a word to Amelia that was not kind and gentle; or thought of a want of hers that he did not try to gratify."

Again the illustrations support what we learn from the text, for they too show that Dobbin has indeed been transformed, as Gneiting explains:

William Dobbin is the only character in Vanity Fair whom the illustrations show growing and developing; in fact he changes so much in the course of the novel that a person might not even recognize him as the same character, and indeed, he is not the same. At the end of the novel Becky wears the same cynical expression of the young girl leaving Miss Pinkerton's, albeit now wan and tired; Amelia still looks the innocent young thing we met in the first chapter; and Joseph is as fat and as stupid as ever. But Dobbin has grown from a gawky, gangly bumpkin to a strikingly good-looking gentleman in a top hat and sideburns. When Dobbin's illustrations are taken as seriously as the text they illuminate, they provide important information concerning Dobbin's role as Vanity Fair's unheroic hero.³³

Thus, although Dobbin is, of necessity, still a fool, he is less of a fool than the others, if only because he knows he is one. There is also external evidence to suggest that Dobbin is the least foolish character in the novel, in his resemblance to whom Ray calls Thackeray's "other great friend of his second Cambridge year" in addition to Edward Fitzgerald. This was John Allen, son of a minister and later one himself, whom "Thackeray liked and admired from the first," and who remained his lifelong friend.³⁴ The similarity between Dobbin and Allen is commented on by Thackeray's daughter, Lady Anne Thackeray Ritchie:

The pictures of Dobbin in his later life have certainly a great resemblance to one of my father's oldest friends and companions at college. This was Archdeacon Allen. . . . "Any one who knew the Archdeacon," his son-in-law writes, "and who has studied 'Vanity Fair,' will recognise his portrait, mutatis mutandis, in the simple-minded, chivalrous Major Dobbin."

"If you were here and could be intimate with John Allen, how you would respect him," my father writes from Coram Street to his mother. "The man is just a perfect saint, nor more nor less, and not the least dogmatical or presumptuous; but working, striving, yearning day and night in the most intense efforts to gain Christian perfection. . . ." ³⁵

Dobbin, too, is not the least dogmatical or presumptuous, and is not only striving, but changing, to become a better person. In this possibility of change which Dobbin represents, Vanity Fair is also allegorical: its basic meaning seems to be well-expressed in Clifford's words:

One recurrent theme in allegorical writing that prevents the action from becoming a seemingly endless process with the overall effect of stasis [is] a belief in the possibility of transformation. This possibility underlies a great deal of literature, it is true, but in allegory it has an obvious didactic basis. If the author believes that his readers can be changed and made wiser by the meaning of his work, then one of the most effective ways for him to demonstrate this is to show his heroes transformed by their experience of the action, upon which the meaning depends. One of the obvious advantages of the journey metaphor lies in answering to this belief, for the journeyer is necessarily transformed by the act of journeying.³⁶

However, despite Thackeray's obvious fondness for Dobbin, this "un-heroic hero" is still a puppet, still a fool, even if less of one than before, because he cannot avoid being one: no one can. Foolishness is a basic condition of life: vanity is unavoidable. In fact, Thackeray's use of "vanity" in Vanity Fair brings to mind what Wheatley says about Thackeray's The Book of Snobs: "The force of the narrator's announcements that he, too, is a Snob derives from the attained sense that Snob-bishness is a kind of psychological synonym for Original Sin."³⁷ Certainly in a novel suffused with Christian and Satanic imagery as is Vanity Fair, it is not hard to see that "vanity" means original sin: the illustrations again work together with the text to show that all of us are fools, even the author.

The illustration which first faced the readers of Vanity Fair in January of 1847 was that which adorned the cover of the monthly Number, and all subsequent ones (Figure 14). It shows a fool standing on a tub preaching to a crowd of other fools. Perhaps Thackeray's description of the illustration from the end of Chapter VIII is better than any other: "But my kind reader will please to remember, that this history has 'Vanity Fair' for a title, and that Vanity Fair is a very vain, wicked, foolish place, full of all sorts of humbugs and falsenesses and pretensions.

No. 1.]

JANUARY.

[Price 1s.]



VANITY FAIR:

PEN AND PENCIL SKETCHES OF ENGLISH SOCIETY.

BY W. M. THACKERAY,

Author of "The Irish Sketch Book," "Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo," of "Jeames's Diary,"
and the "Snob Papers" in "Punch," &c. &c.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED AT THE PUNCH OFFICE, 85, FLEET STREET.

J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH; J. M'LEOD, GLASGOW; J. M'GLASHAN, DUBLIN.

1847.

Figure 14. Early Cover Illustration

And while the moralist, who is holding forth on the cover (an accurate portrait of your humble servant), professes to wear neither gown nor bands, but only the very same long-eared livery in which his congregation is arrayed: yet, look you, one is bound to speak the truth as far as one knows it." We have already seen other paragraphs from this afterword passage of moral commentary and that they reflect Thackeray's changed view of the role of the writer; so also, therefore, must the illustration have been conceived in the same terms. As Hannah explains, "the sketch illustrates the text, and the text itself directly refers to the illustration. . . . In fact, the main lines of the novel intersect at this point," for "Thackeray recognizes that as the moralist he is the connecting link" because "the moralist depicted on the cover is also the narrator of Vanity Fair."³⁸ The important point here is that the moralist is also a fool, an identification which is neither trivial nor accidental.

Harvey suggests that the image of the Fool might have been taken by Thackeray from Cruikshank's "The Folly of Crime," in which Cruikshank "employs the fool allegorically in much the same way as Thackeray does in his capitals" (Figure 15). Harvey explains that the image of the Fool and Thackeray's choice of a title might have been concomitant inspirations:

He had already written some chapters of the novel that was to become Vanity Fair when 'The Folly of Crime' appeared, but it is unlikely that he had conceived the pictorial use of the Fool at that stage. The use of the Fool associates with the general theme expressed in the title, and it was only in the latter part of 1846 that the formula 'Vanity Fair' occurred to Thackeray, inspiring him to reorganize the novel; it would seem that before then the novel had no theme, and it is fair to assume that the idea of the Fool came with that unifying imaginative bouleversement. It could well be, therefore, that in the genesis of the idea animating the novel, the inspirations of Bunyan and Cruikshank combined.³⁹



Figure 15. Cruikshank's "The Folly of Crime"

One is inclined to agree with Harvey's speculation. Furthermore, these six critical paragraphs are followed by a tailpiece depicting a figure who can be none other than Thackeray himself (Figure 16). As Hannah says, it is "a small drawing of the puppet-master, attired in his livery, sitting cross-legged, with a puppet on a stick over one arm, and holding his mask in the other hand. The moony, bespectacled face, revealed from behind it, is, of course, Thackeray's."⁴⁰ However, Hannah is incorrect on one minor point: the figure is not of a puppet-master, for that image came to Thackeray much later. In fact, only days before he was to turn in the final pages and illustrations to his novel did the puppet metaphor occur to him, and this was the result of a chance remark, as Eyre Crowe explained near the end of the century: "It occurred in June, 1848, one day when Thackeray came at lunch-time to my father's house. Torrens McCullagh, happening to be one of the party, said across the table to Thackeray, 'Well, I see you are going to shut up your puppets in their box!' His immediate reply was, 'Yes, and, with your permission, I'll work up that simile.'"⁴¹ The puppet metaphor is an off-shoot of the overriding metaphor in the novel, that of the fool. Stevens explains the attitude we should take toward the puppet metaphor tagged on at the end: "That when the book was completed Thackeray fitted puppetry so skillfully into his final address to readers and set it at the opening of the book [in 'Before the Curtain'] should not mislead us into giving it too much weight in critical discussion."⁴² Rather, the "original basic image" in the novel is that of "the clown moralist in the title page drawing."⁴³

This illustration appeared for the first time in the final "Double Number" in July, 1848. In it for the only time the fool and puppet metaphors are combined in an illustration (Figure 17). Dominating the

only hear the people yelling out "*Ah gredin! Ah monstre!*" and cursing the tyrant of the play from the boxes; but the actors themselves positively refuse to play the wicked parts, such as those of *infâmes Anglais*, brutal Cossacks, and what not, and prefer to appear, at a smaller salary, in their real characters as loyal Frenchmen. I set the two stories one against the other, so that you may see that it is not from mere mercenary motives that the present performer is desirous to show up and trounce his villains; but because he has a sincere hatred of them, which he cannot keep down, and which must find a vent in suitable abuse and bad language.

I warn my "kyind friends," then, that I am going to tell a story of harrowing villany and complicated—but, as I trust,



intensely interesting—crime. My rascals are no milk-and-water rascals, I promise you. When we come to the proper places we won't spare fine language—No, no! But when we are going over the quiet country we must perforce be calm. A tempest in a slop-basin is absurd. We will reserve that sort of thing for the mighty ocean and the lonely midnight. The present Chapter is very mild. Others—— But we will not anticipate *those*.

And, as we bring our characters forward, I will ask leave, as a man and a brother, not only to introduce them, but occasionally to step down from the platform, and talk about them: if they are good and kindly, to love them and shake them by the hand: if they are silly, to laugh at them confidentially in the reader's sleeve: if they are wicked and heart-

Figure 16. Chapter 8 Tailpiece

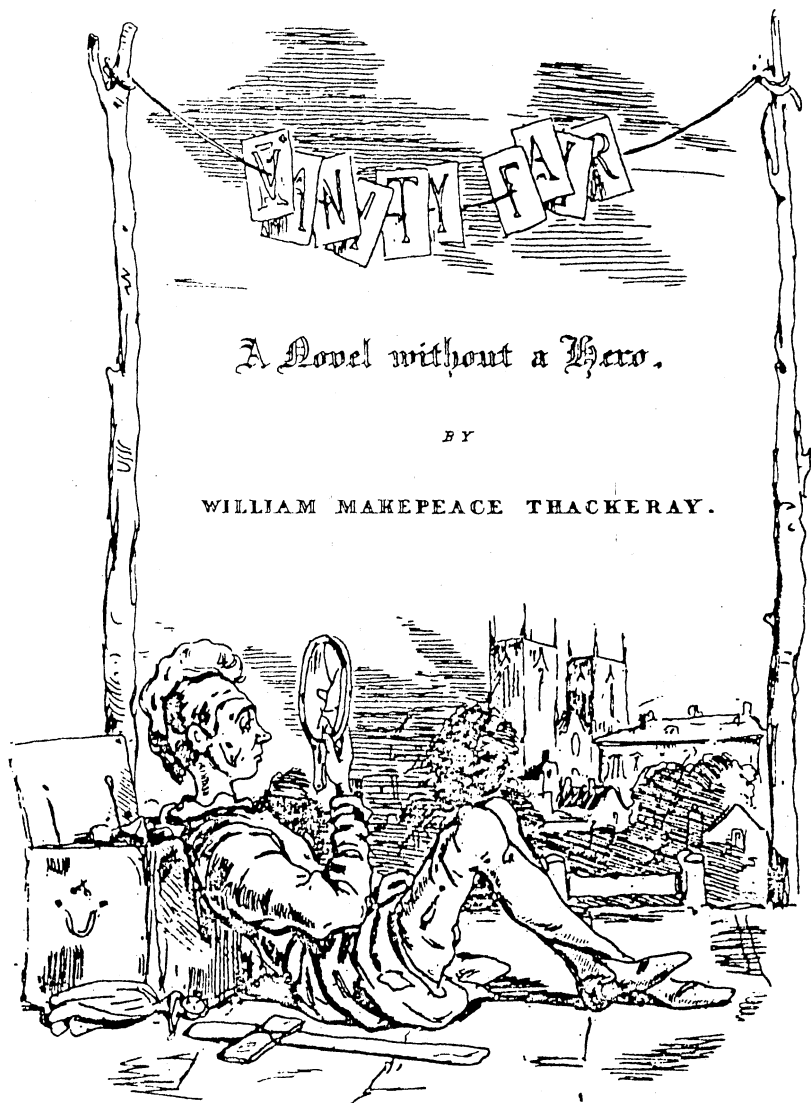


Figure 17. Final Title Page

tableau is a fool who is sitting on an open-air stage beneath the banner "Vanity Fair," with a church in the background.⁴⁴ The fool, propped against a box of puppets next to which lies a female puppet--undoubtedly Becky--and a puppet-master's control bar (which closely resembles Dobbin's wooden sword in the pictorial capital to Chapter V, and also a crucifix: the concatenation is clear, and clever), stares sadly into a cracked and warped mirror. Thackeray refers to this illustration in the first sentence of "Before the Curtain," written also at the same time, after the novel was completed: "As the Manager of the Performance sits before the curtain on the boards, a feeling of profound melancholy comes over him in his survey of the bustling place." However, the scene itself is static, and what the fool sees in the mirror--which is all he surveys --is his own face, distorted by the mirror's defects. This illustration is a reverberation of a passage in Chapter II which follows closely, in the same paragraph, that in which the narrator presses home the point about Becky's questionable motivation in twice thanking Heaven: "Miss Rebecca was not, then, in the least kind or placable. All the world used her ill, said this young misanthropist, and we may be pretty certain that persons whom all the world treats ill, deserve entirely the treatment they get. The world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face."

NOTES

¹Speech at the Royal Academy Dinner, May, 1858, reprinted by Lewis Melville, Thackeray (London, 1910), II, p. 115. Also see Ray, The Uses of Adversity, pp. 167-74, for a recounting of this period of Thackeray's life, and Harvey, pp. 76-77, for Thackeray's artistic debt to Hogarth and Cruikshank and for a list of Thackeray's illustrations prior to Vanity Fair.

²Macmillan's Magazine, 9 (1864), 359-60, as quoted in Stevens, "Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" 19.

³North British Review, 40 (1864), 255, as quoted in Stevens, "Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" 20.

⁴Letter to W. S. Williams, March 11, 1848, in The Brontes: Life and Letters, ed. C. K. Shorter (London, 1908), I, p. 402, as quoted in Harvey, p. 82.

⁵See note 34.

⁶"Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" 25. In this article Stevens also explains how no edition of Vanity Fair except for the first, or the monthly Numbers, has placed Thackeray's illustrations within the text accurately.

⁷Gneiting, 174.

⁸"Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" 26.

⁹Harvey, p. 84.

¹⁰Harvey, p. 91.

¹¹"Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair,'" 32.

¹²Harvey, pp. 87-88.

¹³Harvey, p. 87.

¹⁴Gneiting, 176.

- ¹⁵Harvey, p. 82.
- ¹⁶Gneiting, 197.
- ¹⁷Gneiting, 197.
- ¹⁸Gneiting, 187.
- ¹⁹"A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager of the Performance,'" 395.
- ²⁰Paris, p. 91.
- ²¹Leyburn, p. 8.
- ²²Clifford, p. 37.
- ²³"Vanity Fair: The Double Standard," in The English Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Essays on the Literary Mediation of Human Values, ed. George Goodin (Urbana and London: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 127.
- ²⁴"Thackeray's Use of Vanity Fair," Studies in English Literature, 11 (1971), 713.
- ²⁵"Vanity Fair: An Irony Against Heroes," Critical Quarterly, 6 (1964), 11-31, as published in his The Crazy Fabric: Essays in Irony (London: Macmillan & Co., 1965); rpt. in Twentieth Century Interpretations of Vanity Fair, ed. M. G. Sundell (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969), p. 76.
- ²⁶Lougy, 257.
- ²⁷Koheleth--The Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes, 3rd ed. (1951; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968), pp. 69, 73.
- ²⁸Gordis, p. 110.
- ²⁹Gordis, p. 111.
- ³⁰Gordis, p. 37.
- ³¹Lady Ritchie in her Introduction to Vanity Fair in Works recounts an episode which reveals Thackeray's continued refusal to think for his readers:

In "Appleton's Journal," which appeared long ago, there is an article by Mr. J. E. Cooke, which was called "An Hour with Thackeray." ". . . as you speak of Becky Sharp, Mr. Thackeray," said Mr. Cooke, "there is one mystery about her which I should like to have cleared up. Nearly at the end of the book there is a picture of Jos Sedley seated, a sick old man in his chamber, and behind the curtain glaring and ghastly is Becky grasping a dagger. Beneath the picture is the single word 'Clytemnestra.'"

"Yes."

"Did Becky kill him, Mr. Thackeray?"

He smoked meditatively as if he was endeavouring to arrive at the solution of some problem, and then with a slow smile dawning on his face, replied, "I do not know" (I, pp. xlvii-xlix).

³²"A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager,'" 395.

³³Gneiting, 192.

³⁴Ray, The Uses of Adversity, p. 132; on Thackeray's friendship with Fitzgerald, see pp. 129-32.

³⁵Works, I, pp. xxxiv-xxxv.

³⁶Clifford, p. 29.

³⁷Wheatley, p. 54.

³⁸Hannah, 126.

³⁹Harvey, p. 89.

⁴⁰Hannah, 122.

⁴¹Thackeray's Haunts and Homes (London, 1897), pp. 55-56, as quoted in Stevens, "A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager,'" 396.

⁴²"A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager,'" 397.

⁴³"A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager,'" 396.

⁴⁴There is evidently some controversy on which church this represents. Gneiting thinks it is Westminster Abbey (176), but Stevens believes we see "the twin towers of the church of Ottery St. Mary, Thackeray's boyhood home in Devon" ("A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager,'" 395).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The attitude which Thackeray expresses in the looking-glass passage, so close to solipsism, is perhaps the cause of the many objections raised and problems encountered by those critics who attempt to characterize Vanity Fair as primarily a realistic novel: in this novel, realism is a device rather than a perspective or point of view. As Winslow Rogers says of Thackeray, "His works are unsatisfying to readers in search of a fictional experience in which a clear and constant distance is maintained between the novelist and his created world."¹ William Dean Howells, for example, complained that, in spite of Thackeray's being a realist by inclination, "he talked of fiction as a fable-land, when he ought to have known it and proclaimed it as the very home of truth."² But Ronald Sukenick, although he is speaking of Sterne, has answered Howells' objection Thackeray's sins against the canons of fiction when he says that a "calculated demolition of 'the' novel is a thrust into reality rather than a retreat into literature. Let's do away with make-believe, we aren't children. Why suspend disbelief--is Disneyland really necessary?"³ Thus Arnold Kettle errs when he tries to judge Thackeray by a standard of detachment and says, "constantly, throughout the whole novel, the effect produced by what the characters do is weakened or dissipated by the author's comments,"⁴ for he fails to realize, as Hannah says, that "The narrative method of the novel is a result of Thackeray's

awareness of the moral issue."⁵ In some ways, in fact, Thackeray was far ahead of his time, if Federman is right that the novel of the future "will create a kind of writing, an endless interrogation of what it is doing while doing it, an endless denunciation of its fraudulence, of what it really is: an illusion (a fiction), just as life is an illusion (a fiction)."⁶ For Vanity Fair, which Roger B. Wilkenfeld calls "this astonishingly interrogative novel,"⁷ does not pretend to be "real"--or, rather, only pretends to be real. As Rogers says, "No event in a Thackeray novel can have a stable meaning; no character can be finally known. For all its energy, Vanity Fair tends to become an endless spiral of reflections and reverberations, mirrors and echoes."⁸

But we should beware of making Thackeray into a more fashionably modern writer than he really is, as Rogers warns us. Rather, the affinities which Vanity Fair has to medieval writings are perhaps more clear, especially in its use of the image of the fool with his mirror.

The word "mirror" is frequently used in medieval allegories. As James I. Wimsatt says, "Medieval compendiums of all kinds have mirror as an element in their titles."⁹ The use of the word in medieval literature is very similar to that of Thackeray in the looking-glass passage of Chapter II, as Leyburn's words reveal:

A recurring image for the effect of both satire and allegory is that of the mirror. The titles of such satires as Speculum Stultorum and The Steele Glas suggest it; and Barclay sets it forth in the Argument to The Shyp of Foles: "this our Boke representeth vnto the iyen of the redars the states and condicions of men: so that euery man may behold within the same the cours of his lyfe and his mysgouerned maners, as he sholde beholde the shadows of the fygure of his visage within a bright Myrrour." What the mirror reveals is, to be sure, just a reflection of reality; but it is only by means of the reflection that reality is to be perceived.

Thus the mirror which appears in the final cover illustration to Vanity Fair is a functional element in the allegory which forms the foundation of the novel; it is not mere decoration. As Lougy says, "The title-page illustration is a visual representation emblematic of the complete novel."¹¹ One thing which the mirror symbolizes is the broad scope of the novel, which it has always signified: "The use of mirror or its Latin equivalent speculum in a title generally implies an attempt at inclusiveness or completeness."¹² Another end that it accomplishes is to reemphasize that the novel forces the reader to become involved: the novel acts as a mirror which shows the reader that he, too, is a puppet, as Hannah explains:

The illustration of the puppet-master with his puppets contemplating his own image, is perhaps the most apt and comprehensive example of the functioning of Thackeray's visual imagination. It is precisely right, and it illuminates the whole novel. For Thackeray in Vanity Fair is both puppet-master and one of his own puppets, pulled by the same strings, actuated by the same motives, which animate his own figures. . . . For it is here that the novel itself takes over from the illustration. And it faces the reader with another reflection; it is not only Thackeray who looks into the mirror.¹³

The major metaphors of Vanity Fair--the fool looking into a mirror, the fool preaching to a congregation of fools, the fool unmasking himself, the puppetry, the invocation of Bunyan, the echoing of Ecclesiastes--all work together to force the reader's involvement in the story, which is, as we have seen, one of the aims of allegory. In his use of none of these metaphors is Thackeray merely indulging himself. Harriet Blodgett's comment is certainly apt here: "The important closing passage sustains the tone and theme developed throughout the novel; it is a final statement intended to reverberate in the reader's mind long after he has 'shut up' the book. Its metaphor is directed right at the reader and

not, as some have assumed, at the narrator's self-conscious authorship."¹⁴ Thackeray's narrative strategy--his refusal, for example, to tell us if Becky did kill Jos directly--is in keeping with the allegorical mode, and the subtlety which allegory requires of the reader's interpretation of the action is undoubtedly the cause of much of the adverse criticism which Vanity Fair has aroused among critics who try to judge it by the standards of realism. We must remember Leyburn's explanation of the role of the reader of allegory:

Throwing the responsibility on the reader and thereby quickening his imaginative response enables the writer to hide behind his figure and let the reader draw his own conclusions. There is a beguiling simplicity about allegory as a means of making satire apparently objective. The writer can direct the point of view without being present. He can give the impression of being a fair and impartial presenter of evidence even while he is a judge controlling judgment. . . . Neither allegorist nor satirist wishes to betray himself and lay himself open to his own exposure. . . . The allegorical satirist is more likely to achieve his purpose if he can sustain the attitude of the ironist who philosophically observes the incongruities of human life, for the reader makes the contradictory demands of detachment and guidance. The use of allegory enables the satirist to fulfill these conflicting requirements by giving a dramatic point of view to his disguised judgment.¹⁵

What Thackeray is telling us in Vanity Fair is that all of us are fools. Thackeray has deftly woven this image into the fabric of his novel, both in text and illustration, not only in the two cover illustrations, separated by a year and a half, but also in other illustrations. "As the series of pictorial capitals advances, Thackeray builds up a cast of rich children, urchins, men in fool's costume, and couples in 18th-century finery, who perform in advance, in simple tableaux, the actions that the protagonists will presently perform with more complexity and pain. The men in fool's costume, especially, have the function of a Chorus."¹⁶ Again we notice the close parallel between Vanity Fair and the medieval

allegory. As Enid Welsford explains, in the moralities of the late Middle Ages, fools are often "made to serve the comic purpose of the dramatist, fulfilling--though crudely--some of the functions of the chorus" whereby "the fool appears as a herald of the prologue and during the main action of the play" and also acts to "parody or criticize the actions of other characters in the play."¹⁷ Thus Thackeray's illustrations relieve some of the burden of moral commentary from the text, as Harvey explains: "Since the unifying theme of the novel--'vanitas vanitatum'--is very general and yet very simple, the repeated assertion of it could easily become monotonous and inert; some unobtrusive and easily varied reminder is necessary, and the Fools in the pictorial capitals . . . perform this function with an easy humour."¹⁸ Many have been misled by Thackeray's use of the images of the fool and the fool's cousin, the puppet, seeing in them only a reflection of cynicism and ennui and hopelessness. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is only by playing the role of the fool that we can adopt the final strategy of accepting life on its own terms. The Thackeray-fool's acceptance is reminiscent of Folly's reasoning in Erasmus The Praise of Folly (1511), for, as Welsford explains, Folly is "beneficial because she fosters the pleasing illusions which make life possible." Folly praises herself as superior to Wisdom, and cites the Bible in support:

Nor can I give ye any reason why it should seem so strange, when Saint Paul imputes a kind of folly even to God himself. . . . Christ speaking to the Father says openly, "Thou knowest my foolishnesse". Nor is it without ground that fools are so acceptable to God. The reason perhaps may be this, that as Princes carry a suspicious eye ypon those that are over-wise, and consequently hate 'em . . . and on the contrary are delighted in those blunter and unlaboured wits; in like manner Christ ever abhors and condemns those wise men, and such as put confidence in their own wisdom. And this Paul makes clearly out when he said . . . "It pleased God

by foolishness to save the world", as well knowing it had been impossible to have reform'd it by wisdom. . . . And what does all this drive at, but that all mankind are fools --nay, even the very best?¹⁹

Indeed, even the very best, Dobbin, is a fool; in some ways, in fact, he is the most foolish, for he is the most Christian. As Folly says, "to speak briefly, all Christian Religion seems to have a kind of alliance with folly, and in no respect to have any accord with wisdom."²⁰ Thus in the allegory which is Vanity Fair, the worldly-wise and crafty Becky is the very image of everything un-Christian, as the Satanic imagery associated with her makes clear, and the image of the fool which permeates the novel, not only in the figure of Dobbin but in that of the author who holds the mirror up to our faces, is the symbol of everything Christian. As Welsford says, the "words of Erasmus suggest an important feature of fool-literature--its essentially 'Christian' quality, of which The Praise of Folly is a case in point."²¹ And, we might add, of which Vanity Fair is also a case in point.

Vanity Fair is, on at least one level, and that the most important level, a deeply religious allegory. What Welsford says of the man of the Middle Ages we could also say of Thackeray: "To the medieval thinker, man was essentially vain, and it was only as he knew himself for the fool that he was, that he could become the lowly recipient of Divine Wisdom."²² Beneath the surface glitter of the "wonderfully animated world" of Vanity Fair there resides the Christian allegory of the fool, whose journey through Vanity Fair is as fraught with peril as is Christian's in Pilgrim's Progress. At the basis of the novel is, to use Wilkenfeld's words, "the allegorical substitution (invited and confirmed by Thackeray) of the novelist for the fool: only a fool would attempt to raise himself

by raising his voice to describe the nature of a world uniformly populated by fools; only other fools would listen to him and believe him."²³

But one need not belabor the point: Thackeray well knew what he was about when he wrote Vanity Fair: "I want to leave everybody dissatisfied and unhappy at the end of the story--we ought all to be with our own and all other stories. Good God dont I see (in that may-be cracked and warped looking glass in which I am always looking) my own weaknesses lusts follies shortcomings? . . . We must lift up our voices about these and howl to a congregation of fools: so much at least has been my endeavor."²⁴

NOTES

¹"Thackeray's Self-Consciousness," in The Worlds of Victorian Fiction, ed. Jerome H. Buckley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975), p. 160.

²"Thackeray's Bad Heroines," Harper's Bazaar, 33 (Nov. 17, 1900), 1799-1804, as quoted in Flamm, p. 169.

³"The New Tradition in Fiction," in Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow, ed. Raymond Federman (Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975), p. 40.

⁴An Introduction to the English Novel (London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1951), I, 169.

⁵Hannah, 126.

⁶"Surfiction--Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction," in Surfiction, p. 11.

⁷"'Before the Curtain,' and Vanity Fair," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 26 (1971), 313.

⁸Rogers, p. 151.

⁹Wimsatt, p. 137.

¹⁰Leyburn, pp. 8-9.

¹¹"The Structure of Vanity Fair: An Exchange," PMLA, 90 (1975), 924.

¹²Wimsatt, p. 139.

¹³Hannah, 126-27.

¹⁴"Necessary Presence: The Rhetoric of the Narrator in Vanity Fair," Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 22 (Dec., 1967), 215.

¹⁵Leyburn, pp. 10-11.

¹⁶Harvey, p. 88.

¹⁷The Fool: His Social and Literary History (1935; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 234.

¹⁸Harvey, pp. 88-89.

¹⁹Welsford, pp. 238, 240-41.

²⁰Welsford, p. 241.

²¹Welsford, p. 241.

²²Welsford, p. 242.

²³Wilkenfeld, 309.

²⁴Letter to the critic Robert Bell on September 3, 1848, in The Letters and Private Papers, II, pp. 423-24.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alter, Robert J. Partial Magic: The Novel as a Self-Conscious Genre.
- apRoberts, Ruth. "Thackeray Boom: A Review." Costerus, 5 (1974), 315-24.
- Baker, Joseph E. "'Vanity Fair' and the Celestial City." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 10 (1955), 89-98.
- Blodgett, Harriet. "Necessary Presence: The Rhetoric of the Narrator in Vanity Fair." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 22 (1967), 211-23.
- Booth, Wayne C. The Rhetoric of Fiction. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Buckley, Jerome H. The Worlds of Victorian Fiction. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975.
- Chesterton, G. K. Thackeray. London: George Bell and Sons, 1909.
- Clifford, Gay. The Transformations of Allegory. London: Routledge and Paul, 1975.
- Craig, G. Armour. "On the Style of Vanity Fair." In Style in Prose Fiction: English Institute Essays. Ed. Harold C. Martin. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1959, pp. 87-113. Rpt. in The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism. Ed. Ian P. Watt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, pp. 229-47.
- Dooley, J. J. "Thackeray's Use of Vanity Fair." Studies in English Literature, 11 (1971), 701-13.
- "Down the Mode Mine." Times Literary Supplement [London], June 10, 1965, pp. 465-66.
- Dyson, A. E. "Vanity Fair: An Irony Against Heroes." Critical Quarterly, 6 (1954), 11-31.
- Federman, Raymond. "Surfiction--Four Propositions in Form of an Introduction." In Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975, pp. 5-15.
- Flamm, Dudley. Thackeray's Critics: An Annotated Bibliography of British and American Criticism, 1836-1901. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1967.

- Fletcher, Angus. Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1964.
- Ford, Ford Madox. The English Novel, From the Earliest Days to the Death of Joseph Conrad. London: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1929.
- Fraser, Russell A. "Pernicious Casuistry: A Study of Character in Vanity Fair." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 12 (1957), 137-47.
- Grabo, Carl. The Technique of the Novel. New York: Scribner's, 1928.
- Gneiting, Teona Tone. "The Pencil's Role in Vanity Fair." Huntington Library Quarterly, 39 (1976), 171-202.
- Gordis, Robert. Koheleth--The Man and His World: A Study of Ecclesiastes. 3rd ed. 1951; rpt. New York: Schocken Books, 1968.
- Hannah, Donald. "'The Author's Own Candles': The Significance of the Illustrations to Vanity Fair." In Renaissance and Modern Essays Presented to Vivian de Sola Pinto in Celebration of His Seventieth Birthday. Ed. G. R. Hibbard with George A. Ponichas and Allan Rodway. London: Routledge and Paul, 1966, pp. 119-27.
- Hardy, Barbara. The Exposure of Luxury: Radical Themes in Thackeray. Pittsburg: Univ. of Pittsburg Press, 1972.
- Harvey, J. R. Victorian Novelists and Their Illustrators. New York: N.Y.U. Press, 1971.
- Honig, Edwin. Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1959.
- James, Henry. The Tragic Muse. New York: Scribner's, 1908.
- Kettle, Arnold. An Introduction to the English Novel. London: Hutchinson Univ. Library, 1953.
- Kiely, Robert. "Victorian Harlequin: The Function of Humor in Thackeray's Critical and Miscellaneous Prose." In Veins of Humor. Ed. Harry Levin. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972, pp. 147-66.
- Klein, J. T. "The Dual Center: A Study of Narrative Structure in Vanity Fair." College Literature, 4 (1977), 122-28.
- Leyburn, Ellen Douglas. Satiric Allegory: Mirror of Man. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1956.
- Loofbourow, John. Thackeray and the Form of Fiction. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1964.
- Lougy, Robert E. "The Structure of Vanity Fair: An Exchange." PMLA, 90 (1975), 924-25.

- _____. "Vision and Satire: The Warped Looking Glass in Vanity Fair." PMLA, 90 (1975), 256-69.
- Lubbock, Percy. The Craft of Fiction. London, 1921; rpt. New York: Scribner's, 1955.
- McMaster, Juliet. Thackeray: The Major Novels. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1971.
- Melville, Lewis. Thackeray. London, 1910; rpt. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1928.
- Olmsted, John Charles. Thackeray and His Twentieth-Century Critics: An Annotated Bibliography. New York: Garland, 1977.
- Paris, Bernard J. A Psychological Approach to Fiction: Studies in Thackeray, Stendhal, George Eliot, Dostoevsky and Conrad. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973.
- Rawlins, Jack P. Thackeray's Novels: A Fiction That is True. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1974.
- Ray, Gordon N., ed. The Letters and Private Papers of William Makepeace Thackeray. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1945-46. In 4 vols.
- _____. Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity, 1811-1846. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955.
- _____. "Vanity Fair: One Version of the Novelist's Responsibility." In The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism. Ed. Ian P. Watt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971, pp. 248-65.
- Rogers, Winslow. "Thackeray's Self-Consciousness." In The Worlds of Victorian Fiction. Ed. Jerome H. Buckley. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1975, pp. 149-63.
- Stevens, Joan. "A Note on Thackeray's 'Manager of the Performance.'" Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 22 (1968), 391-97.
- _____. "Thackeray's Vanity Fair." Review of English Literature, 6 (1965), 19-38.
- Sundell, Michael G., ed. Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Vanity Fair: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969.
- Sutherland, John A. "The Expanding Narrative of Vanity Fair." Journal of Narrative Technique, 3 (1973), 149-69.
- _____. "Thackeray's 'Before the Curtain.'" Notes and Queries, 19 (1972), 408-09.

- Swanson, Roger M. "Vanity Fair: The Double Standard." In The English Novel in the Nineteenth Century: Essays on the Literary Mediation of Human Values. Ed. George Goodin. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1972, pp. 126-44.
- Sukenick, Ronald. "The New Tradition in Fiction." In Surfiction: Fiction Now and Tomorrow. Ed. Raymond Federman. Chicago: Swallow Press, 1975, pp. 35-45.
- Thackeray, William Makepeace. Vanity Fair: A Novel Without a Hero. London, 1910; rpt. New York: AMS Press, Inc., 1968. In 2 vols.
- Trollope, Anthony. Thackeray. London, 1879; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research, 1968.
- Van Ghent, Dorothy. The English Novel: Form and Function. London, 1953; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1961.
- Watt, Ian P. The Victorian Novel: Modern Essays in Criticism. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971.
- Welsford, Enid. The Fool: His Social and Literary History. London, 1935; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1968.
- Wheatley, James H. Patterns in Thackeray's Fiction. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1969.
- Wilkenfeld, Roger B. "'Before the Curtain' and Vanity Fair." Nineteenth-Century Fiction, 26 (1971), 307-18.
- Wimsatt, James I. Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature. New York: Pegasus, 1970.

VITA²

Donald Edward Edwards

Candidate for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Thesis: VANITY FAIR AS ALLEGORY

Major Field: English

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Dallas, Texas, December 8, 1946, the son of Mrs. Mary A. Edwards.

Education: Graduated from Memorial High School in Enid, Oklahoma, in May, 1964; received the Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Sciences from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in January, 1972; completed requirements for the Master of Arts degree at Oklahoma State University in July, 1979.

Professional Experience: Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of English, Oklahoma State University, 1975-1977, and 1978-1979.